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PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING: FURTHER STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Description of the data bases available in the comprehensive information system

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

This report describes the data bases which the Centre on Transnational Corporations creates, maintains and makes available to its staff and to the public, particularly to developing countries. There are five types of data bases which appear in electronic and published form: corporate data; foreign direct investment statistics; legal information; environmental information; and information on information sources.

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INTRODUCTION

1. During its eighth session, the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting asked for a review of the data bases - including corporate data and legal information - of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. The Centre creates, maintains and makes available to its staff and to the public five types of data bases: micro or corporate statistics; macro or national statistics; legal information (laws, regulations and contracts); environmental information (consolidated list of banned products); and information on information sources.

2. The Centre's information system is considered to be of increasing importance to developing countries. Access to information strengthens their bargaining power and negotiating strategy in dealing with transnational corporations. There is growing recognition of the need to collect and process data on transnational corporations efficiently. With the international trend towards computerization and the improvement of hardware and software availability, the Centre's information system has developed into an integral part of its research projects and programme of technical co-operation.

I. CORPORATE DATA

A. "Billion dollar club"

3. The world's largest industrial transnational corporations, with annual sales of more than 1 billion dollars, account for more than one fifth of value-added in the production of goods in both developed market economies and in developing countries. Because of this large share, information on those corporations is of great value to researchers, analysts, negotiators, decision makers and policy makers. Recent developments in the growth of transnational corporations from developing countries, takeovers and buy-outs of large transnationals and the growth of the services sector in the world economy only underscore the necessity further to disseminate information on the largest transnational corporations. The Centre has developed and is maintaining, among other tools, a data base covering industrial transnational corporations with annual sales exceeding 1 billion dollars. The present section describes the information maintained in the "billion-dollar-club" data base and the software package developed around it.

1. Information stored in the billion-dollar-club data base

4. Information describing the foreign component of the activities of transnational corporations provides insight into the phenomenon that is the raison d'être of the Commission on Transnational Corporations and the Centre on Transnational Corporations - that of transnationalization. The term "foreign component" refers to the activities of affiliates located outside the home country of the parent transnational. For example, foreign sales include sales of all affiliates based outside the home country of the parent transnational corporation

to third parties, excluding intra-company sales. Data on the foreign component of the activities of the largest transnationals have historically been used as a measure of the transnationalization of corporations and provide a basis for inquiry into the transnationalization of the world economy. To reflect this phenomenon, the selection of corporations to be included in the data base is based on the following three criteria:

(a) The corporation is a parent company engaged in the manufacturing or extractive sectors;

(b) The corporation has one or more foreign affiliates;

(c) The total annual sales of the corporation exceed 1 billion dollars.

5. The data base includes more than 800 transnational corporations now meeting these three criteria. The distribution by country and by principal line of business is shown in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Geographical distribution of enterprises having total annual sales of over 1 billion dollars

Country	Number of enterprises	Share (percentage)
United States of America	301	39.4
Japan	141	18.5
United Kingdom	80	10.5
Germany	61	8.0
France	33	4.3
Canada	23	3.0
Netherlands	20	2.6
Sweden	18	2.4
Switzerland	13	1.7
Italy	9	1.2
Republic of Korea	8	1.0
Belgium	8	1.0
Australia	6	0.8
Spain	6	0.8
Finland	5	0.7
Other countries (20)	31	4.1
Total	763	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of billion-dollar enterprises by main line of business

Main line of business	Number of enterprises	Share (percentage)
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	10	1.3
Mining and quarrying	21	2.8
Oil and gas production and refineries	59	7.7
Manufacture of food, beverages	90	11.8
Textile, wearing apparel and leather	20	2.6
Manufacturing of paper, printing	50	6.6
Manufacture of chemicals	119	15.6
Manufacture of non-metallic minerals	17	2.2
Basic metal industries	67	8.8
Manufacture of machinery	186	24.4
Manufacture of office computers	17	2.2
Manufacture of motor vehicles	41	5.4
Other	66	8.7
Total	763	100.0

6. The information maintained in the data base can be divided into the following three categories:

(a) Directory information: name of the company; home country; main line of business.

(b) Financial information: total and foreign components of sales; net income after taxes; net income before taxes; shareholder's equity; capital outlay; research and development expenditures; wages and salaries; total assets.

Total component of exports from home country.

(c) Non-financial information: total and foreign component of number of employees.

(d) Family-tree information: name, country of origin and up to eight levels of affiliation of the foreign affiliates of the parent transnational corporation.

7. To identify a transnational corporation in the data base, a seven-character code, developed by the Centre, is utilized.

8. The financial and non-financial information is segmented geographically (region or country) and by line of business, whenever the data are available. Lines of business have been standardized according to the International Standard

Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), keeping in mind the proposed revisions to the classification. For geographical distribution, a three-character code is being used.

9. All financial data are stored in United States dollars, applying the International Monetary Fund annual average exchange rates for the conversion of national currencies into dollars.

10. The Centre uses different sources to identify transnational corporations with annual sales of more than 1 billion dollars and to locate the required data. It relies heavily on annual reports as primary sources. In the case of transnational corporations from the United States the reports required by the Securities and Exchange Commission are utilized. In addition to currency-conversion problems, there is also the problem of the lack of comparability between countries in financial statements because of the differences in national accounting requirements.

11. The availability of data differs from item to item (table 3). While data on total sales, net income and employment can be located relatively easily, data on research and development, capital outlay etc. and on the foreign component of corporation activities, are more difficult to locate.

Table 3. Data availability on enterprises with total annual sales of over 1 billion dollars for selected items, 1984-1986

(Percentage)

Item	Total	Foreign
Sales	98	61
Net income	88	13
Employees	83	23
Research and development	47	1

2. Development of the "billion-dollar-club" microcomputer system

12. The "billion-dollar-club" data base includes 10 financial and non-financial items by geographical area (country and region) and line of business, from 1971 to 1989. This translates into over 150,000 numerical items of information.

13. During the 1970s, the data were stored in the United Nations mainframe computer. In order to give Governments and related institutions easier access to the data base, the Centre began, in 1986, to develop a data base system that would take advantage of the relative low price, ease of use and portability of personal computers.

14. The "billion dollar club" has been developed into an entirely menu-driven, PC-based data base. This software application, for IBM-compatible personal computers, has been designed, programed and tested in-house. It is chiefly an open-ended structure. Although the Centre uses it for the "billion-dollar-club" data base, it is expected that other users will be able to utilize the same software, with virtually no additional modifications, to store data on corporate items different from those actually included in the "billion-dollar-club" data base (national partners of transnational corporations, affiliates, financial data on local affiliates etc.). Moreover, built-in data exchange applications exist to facilitate the transfer of data between different users of the software at the national, regional and international levels. For the installation of the data base, the basic requirements include a 100-per-cent IBM-compatible personal computer with a minimum of 512 KByte memory and a 10-MB hard disk, as well as DOS version 3.2 or higher.

15. This system was recently installed in the UNCTC/ECLAC Joint Unit (Santiago) and in the Headquarters of the Junta of the Cartagena Agreement (Lima). Such installations unfortunately have been limited, owing to the financial crisis and are dependent on extrabudgetary financing.

3. User applications

16. The "billion-dollar-club" data base permits the generation of statistical tables showing the performance and/or the financial position of transnational corporations over time periods. Users can thus analyse trends and changes in financial positions at both the micro and macro levels. Reports on individual companies can be generated easily, providing an immediate display of any parent company's financial status, as well as an affiliate listing ("family tree"). In addition, a built-in application facilitates the transfer of these data into spreadsheets, where statistical tables of aggregated data, financial ratios, trends, segmented data by geographical area and line of business, and rankings can be produced and manipulated.

17. Besides retrieving data in standardized form by the menu-driven application, the user can be provided with a utility program to extract data from the database. In addition, a maintenance feature is included in the package, allowing the user to enter new data and to update already entered data.

18. As mentioned above, one of the primary considerations during the development of this software package was portability. Given the fact that corporate data require constant updating, it became essential for the system to provide for the regular exchange of data with a minimum of effort and inconvenience. As it stands now, corporate data at the parent company level (that is, aggregate data) are collected at the Centre and can be transferred to other installed data bases on a regular basis. At the same time, data on affiliates can be collected at the host-country level and transferred to the Centre or other data bases.

19. In extracting and aggregating data of the "billion-dollar-club" data base, an analysis of the development of the world's largest industrial transnational

corporations is being undertaken by the Centre. For that purpose, 511 such corporations with total sales for the years 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1986 were selected. Subsets of those data were created, containing several time series on foreign sales, total employment, total net income, total expenditures on research and development segmented by home country, region or main line of business. The data sets were exported from the data base format into a spreadsheet software package (Lotus 1-2-3), where data were manipulated to generate tables with aggregated data. Those tables served as input to create graphs (figs. I and II).

Figure I. Growth of foreign sales of 231 transnational corporations, by region, 1980-1986

(1980 = 100)

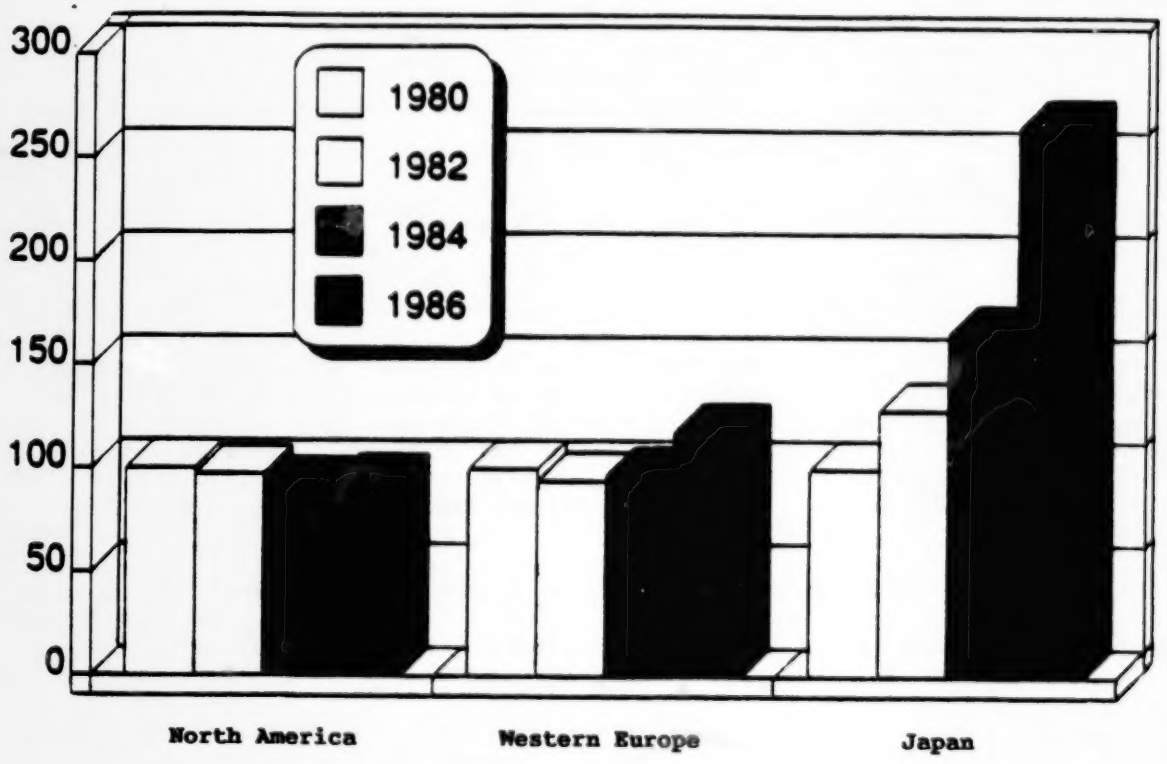
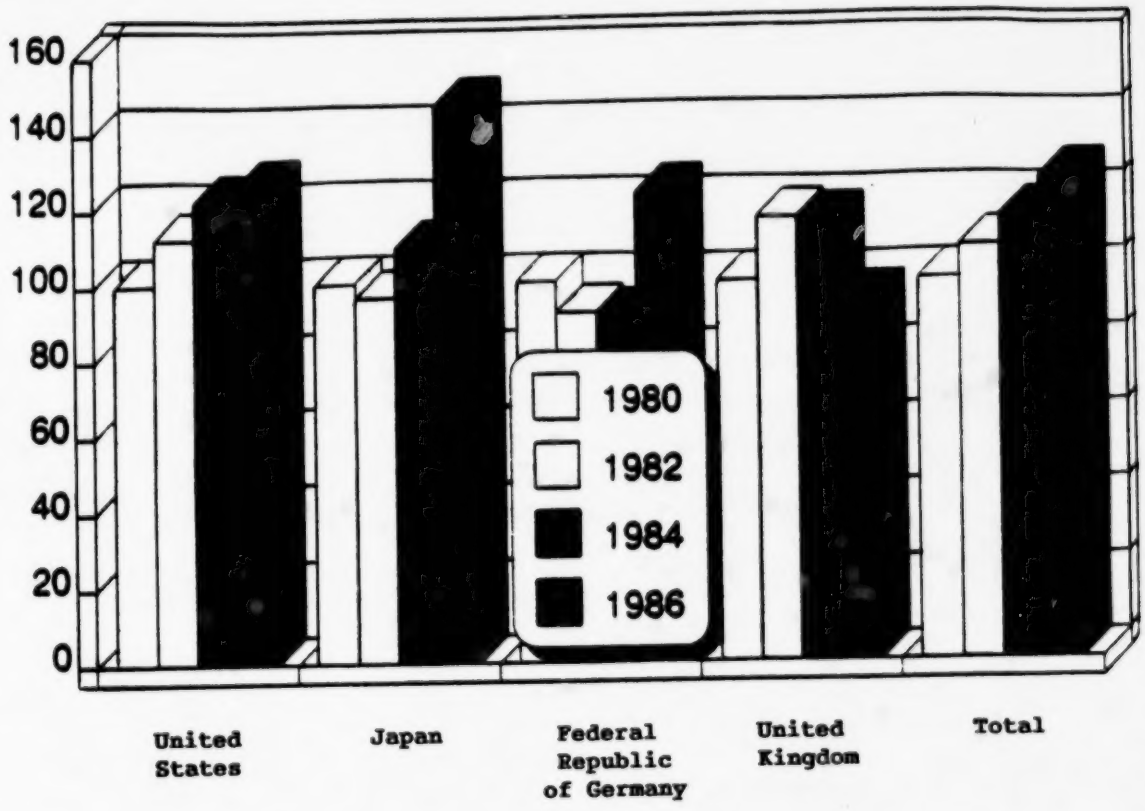


Figure II. Growth of the ratio total sales per employee, by country, 1980-1986

(1980 = 100)



B. Transnational corporations from developing countries

20. Investment flows from developing countries underestimate the growing activities of their transnational corporations. This is largely due to the fact that the firms prefer new forms of investment to the wholly or majority-owned subsidiary form of investment. There has been a dramatic increase in the activities of transnational corporations from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan Province of China.

21. There are currently 821 transnational corporations from developing countries in the Centre's data base. The country profile includes the following information, stored in a personal computer, for the latest year available (1988 or 1989):

(a) Name of corporation;

(b) Home country;

(c) Main line of business;

(d) Employment;

(e) Number of affiliates by country.

C. Small and medium-sized transnational corporations

22. Small and medium-sized transnational corporations are defined as firms whose employment is less than 500, unless otherwise specified. This definition was agreed upon in the United States by the 1980 White House Conference on Small Business.

23. Although many small and medium-sized transnational corporations have been rather reluctant to engage in international business because of unfamiliarity with foreign markets, the recent technological developments in communications, transportation and financial industries have encouraged those firms to enter the international market.

24. Based on an analysis of 735 small and medium-sized transnational corporations, it has been found that they had, on an average, 3.2 foreign affiliates in 1986-1987.

25. At present, 735 small and medium-sized transnational corporations are covered in the Centre's data base. It contains the following information, stored in a personal computer, for the latest available year (1988 or 1989):

(a) Name of corporation;

(b) Home country;

(c) Main line of business;

(d) Employment;

(e) Number of affiliates by country.

D. Service transnational corporations

26. In 1989, the Centre has continued work on its Directory and data base of the 500 largest service companies. The first volume of the Directory was published in 1990. It builds on the Centre's effort initiated in connection with the Fourth Survey of Transnational Corporations in World Development. To account for the heterogeneity of the services sector, the Directory is organized by individual service industries; for each of the 37 industries covered, brief company profiles will be developed for 10-12 service firms and two or three medium and small-sized firms. The focus of the profiles is on transnational corporation service firms, specifically the nature and extent of their involvement in developing countries.

27. The Directory fills the gap existing in transnational corporation data collection which has focused thus far on industrial transnational corporations and has neglected transnational service corporations despite their growing prominence in the world economy. It will provide a data base for systematic research on transnational service corporations and will contribute to the Centre by being at the forefront of policy research on the growing role of service firms in economic development.

28. The following 14 industries and 202 enterprises are covered in volume I:

Accounting (15 company profiles);

Advertising (15 company profiles);

Air transport (15 company profiles);

Construction (16 company profiles);

Hotels (14 company profiles);

Legal services (15 company profiles);

Market research (9 company profiles);

Publishing (16 company profiles);

Rail transport (13 company profiles);

Restaurant and fast-food chains (15 company profiles);

Retail trade (15 company profiles);

Securities and diversified financial services (15 company profiles);

Shipping and trucking (14 company profiles);

Wholesale trade (15 company profiles).

29. The following information is included to the extent possible:

(a) Name and address of the firm;

(b) Legal status of the firm and its industry of classification within the service sector;

(c) List of directors, including their company affiliation;

(d) Major shareholders and their ownership;

(e) Major historical turning points in the company and its current market position (nature of its market specialization);

(f) Corporate structure: main divisions, subsidiaries, affiliates, non-equity alliances;

(g) Products (principal products, brand names, market shares of main products);

(h) Five-year (1983-1988) - also, part of 1989 - consolidated data, including, to the extent possible, consolidated sales/revenues, operating income, pre-tax income, net income, wage and salary expenditure, research and development and training expenditure, exports from home country, total assets, physical assets, capital outlays, shareholder equity, employment levels, and offices. Where possible, sales/revenues, net income, and asset data are also presented by major foreign markets or, at a minimum, disaggregated by domestic and foreign operations. Data are presented in local currency and United States dollars, providing that the respective firm published financial statements converted into United States dollars. In addition, the usual industry-specific measures are presented. For advertising, these include gross billings for construction, total contracts etc.;

(i) List of all foreign affiliates, including name and country;

(j) Other information as it relates to foreign operations of firms;

(k) Principal data sources.

The information is stored in a personal computer and is also printed in the Directory.

E. East/West business directory

30. An increasing number of East/West businesses is conducted through the Western branches, subsidiaries, joint ventures, affiliates and representative offices of Eastern enterprises and other economic organizations. This data base presents detailed information on more than 800 firms and banks established in the economies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) through the capital participation of "parents" based in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Yugoslavia. The data base also lists a roughly equal number of their representative offices which also serve as important contact points for the conduct of East/West business. The data base is a unique and valuable reference for outward foreign direct-investment statistics.

31. The profile of each firm contains the following information for the latest year (1989 or 1990):

(a) Name of enterprise;

(b) Address of enterprise;

(c) Composition of ownership;

(d) Year established;

(e) Capital;

(f) Total assets;

(g) Fixed assets;

(h) Turnover;

(i) Profit/loss;

(j) Number of employees;

(k) Subsidiaries;

(l) Line of business (all activities).

The information is available on a personal computer and is also printed in the Directory.

F. Transnational corporations operating on the lands of indigenous peoples

32. The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities invited the Centre to assist the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in compiling information on investments and operations on the lands of indigenous peoples, including lands that are currently in dispute. Priority will be given to those transnational corporation activities which are most likely to have a significant impact on indigenous peoples, such as mining, hydro-electric and reclamation projects, large-scale commercial forestry, fishing and agrarian resettlement.

33. The project will give priority to ascertaining, as far as practicable:

(a) The location and character of economic activities conducted by transnational corporations on indigenous lands;

(b) The identity and ultimate source of control over those entities, including parent companies;

(c) The location and extent of indigenous peoples' occupation and use of the land, as well as claims to the land;

(d) The impact of transnational corporations' operations on that land.

34. A questionnaire is being distributed first to indigenous peoples in North and South America and later to those in Africa, Asia and Europe. The success of the project depends on the prompt response of the indigenous organizations. Questionnaire data will be entered on a personal computer and cross-indexed by region, indigenous group, transnational corporation and sector of economic activity, and will be available electronically for the latest year.

G. Transnational corporations with interests in South Africa and Namibia

35. For the second public hearing on the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia, held in September 1989, the Centre prepared a document entitled "List of transnational corporations with interests in South Africa and Namibia" (E/C.10/AC.4/1989/8). Expanding on the format of an earlier list submitted to the 1985 public hearings, the document contained five tables listing transnational corporations:

(a) That had disposed of their equity interests in South Africa/Namibia;

(b) With interests in South Africa/Namibia;

(c) With interests in Namibia;

(d) In the process of disposing of their equity interests in South Africa/Namibia;

(e) Which had reduced their equity interests in South Africa/Namibia.

The criterion for inclusion was that a company had a direct or indirect equity holding of more than 10 per cent in one or more companies in either of the two countries, through a joint venture with a company in either country or through a branch. The tables have been updated on a continuous basis. The information is available only in printed form.

II. FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT DATA

36. One of the principal indicators of the activities of transnational corporations are statistics on foreign direct investment. Such investment can be measured either in terms of annual flows (inward and outward) or in terms of cumulative stocks. Flows and stocks can then be classified by recipient countries and countries of origin, equity investments, intercompany loans and reinvested earnings. Unfortunately, practically no country in the world respects this definition, and foreign direct investment statistics are usually incomplete. More often that not, intercompany loans and reinvested earnings are missing. The incompleteness of the data thus makes it difficult to rank countries in terms of the amount of foreign direct investment they receive or provide. At its eighth session the Group reviewed the foreign direct-investment data base in detail. The present section summarizes and updates that review.

37. With the recent emphasis on free-market activity, increased importance is being attached to the role of foreign direct investment in developing countries. Not only are developing countries being urged to adopt appropriate investment policies and laws but there is also a renewed desire among international organizations for better statistics. Unfortunately, this desire is not matched at the national level: most Governments have reduced the resources devoted to collecting and improving statistics. Nevertheless, the Centre has launched a major project to collect, publish and improve foreign direct investment and related statistics.

A. Data collection

38. During 1989 and 1990, the Centre collected foreign direct investment statistics (stocks and flows), relevant corporate data, legal information (laws, agreements, treaties) and bibliographic sources for each country in the world. The stock and flow data generally cover 1970-1989. The rest of the information is available for the latest year. This has been done with the active co-operation of the Centre's Joint Units in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, and Santiago de Chile. The Joint Units have processed the data that were available and have not made adjustments for widespread deficiencies. At the international level, the Centre is co-operating with OECD to improve compliance with the OECD benchmark definitions for foreign direct investment. The Centre has circulated a questionnaire to all country experts concerning definitions and national data collection methods so that the Centre will have a clear understanding of any weaknesses. The Centre has also had contacts with the Capital Flows Team, International Monetary Fund, which is making recommendations for the revision of the balance-of-payments manual. Documents on methodological problems have been exchanged and informal consultations held.

B. Publication of a handbook on transnational corporations

39. During 1991, the Centre will begin to publish a handbook on transnational corporations, by region. The data will be published as collected, with appropriate footnotes warning users of gaps and other problems. The handbook will contain the foreign direct investment position of 106 countries, the activities of transnational corporations in and from those countries and the regulatory (legal) framework within which they operate. The handbook will be an expanded and updated version of the Directory of Statistics on International Investment and Production, edited by John Dunning and John Cantwell. Eventually, the handbook and its underlying data base will be made available on-line to external users. Much of the effort expended on the handbook has been used to design an adequate computerized system to store, manipulate, and transform data and to print camera-ready copies of tables. The Centre received valuable technical assistance from the electronic data processing unit of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva, which has a large programme for the publication of various statistical bulletins.

C. Technical assistance in data collection and use in developing countries

40. The third phase of the project will consist of the dissemination of the handbook and data base and the improvement of developing countries' systems for the collection and use of the data. In conjunction with its Joint Units, the Centre will also design a technical assistance programme for those developing countries interested in improving their statistics on foreign direct investment and the activities of transnational corporations operating within their borders.

III. INFORMATION ON POLICIES, LAWS AND CONTRACTS

41. An essential ingredient in sound decision-making is access to appropriate, adequate and timely information. In dealings between transnational corporations and host countries, access to legal information is a crucial factor for both parties.

42. While access to information is a crucial factor for both parties involved in a negotiation, evidence shows that with regard to dealings between developing countries and transnational corporations there is an imbalance in favour of the corporations.

43. In response to a request from the Commission on Transnational Corporations, the Centre has continuously updated a comparative study of existing national and regional legislation and regulations enacted for the purpose of regulating the operational activities of transnational corporations. In 1989, volume VII was issued. It covers 18 countries covering areas such as main investment legislation, foreign exchange control regulations, technology transfer, fiscal incentives and taxation, and investment guarantees. This document has proved quite useful to foreign investors and Governments interested in the legislation of developing countries.

44. The Centre is continuing to develop a computer-based indexing and retrieval system on policies, laws and regulations. It has collected and classified a list of legislation relating to foreign direct investment from Asia and the Pacfic, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and Africa. It is also collecting investment legislation from Western and Eastern European countries. This list will be ready for publication in 1991 as part of the handbook on transnational corporations.

45. The Centre has continued to collect contracts and agreements negotiated between developing countries and transnational corporations. It has an extensive collection of over 700 petroleum agreements and 200 mining agreements. Currently, a project has been undertaken to index 200 of the petroleum agreements, placing the information on a computerized data base in order to have access to specific provisions negotiated by different petroleum corporations and developing countries.

46. Many developing countries have asked the Centre for information on model agreements in order to assist in the drafting of contractual agreements. The Centre has provided relevant documentation and sanitized agreements from other countries. It is in the process of placing 200 contracts on a computerized legal data base system, indexed by contract classification and sector, to facilitate their retrieval. The data base will include contracts on joint ventures; licensing; financial, management and technical assistance; and turnkey agreements in various sectors, such as agriculture, communications, engineering, forestry, and tourism.

IV. INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

47. The Centre has continued work on the fourth edition of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Has Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or, in the Case of Pharmaceuticals, Not Approved.

48. The Economic and Social Council has asked the Centre to gather data on existing sources of information on technologies that are environmentally hazardous and the availability of alternative technologies, and to make recommendations to transfer those alternatives to developing countries. The Centre has initiated a study on the feasibility of creating a United Nations information dissemination system on hazardous technologies. At present, there is no activity within the United Nations with a dissemination system on hazardous technologies and their less hazardous alternatives. The Centre proposes to establish a directory of hazardous technologies, a compendium of information on conventional technologies and hazards. The directory would be linked to the Network on Law and Non-Waste Technology, newly established by the Industry and Environment Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Industry and Technology Information Bank of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The Directory and the UNEP Office would be computerized for ease of data storage and response. An alternative, for developing countries that have not installed a computerized system, is a response in writing on specific hazardous technologies and their less hazardous alternatives.

V. INFORMATION ON INFORMATION SOURCES

49. The comprehensive information system of the Centre continued to provide information on sources of information needed for the Centre's programmes of research and technical assistance and fulfilled requests for information from Governments and other end-users.

A. Printed sources

50. The following printed sources were developed in support of the dissemination of information on information sources:

(a) Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia: A Selective Bibliography; a 100-page classification of lists of books, articles and United Nations documents prepared as input to the Public Hearings on the Activities of Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia, organized by the Centre, 4-6 September 1989;

(b) "List of UNCTC consultant reports, 1974-1989", a 600-page list of mission and technical reports prepared by consultants engaged by the Centre, providing access to the information by author, country and topical subject. The reports are available for consultation by qualified users;

(c) "Current books and articles on transnational corporations", a monthly list of recent literature world wide on transnational corporations and foreign direct investment;

(d) Four annotated guides to major printed and computerized sources of country, company and legal information available in the Centre and other information services of the Centre.

51. In addition, the Centre continued its recurrent publication of lists of its documents and publications, including "List of UNCTC sales publications", "List of UNCTC workshop papers", "Documents of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations", "List of documents of the UNCTC joint units with the regional commissions".

B. Computerized sources

52. The Centre has developed the microcomputer-based TRANCIS (Transnational corporations information service) system to store, process, retrieve and disseminate textual information on transnational corporations and foreign direct investments using the micro-CIS/ISIS software package developed by UNESCO. The purpose of the system is to provide a vehicle for dissemination and exchange of data of interest to national Governments, building on the information technology (that is, microcomputers and the CDS/ISIS package) already installed in the field.

53. The pilot version of the system has been installed at the Centre and is now undergoing testing and evaluation. Three data bases are at present accessible through the system, providing references and abstracts:

(a) Literature of the past five years dealing with transnational corporations;

(b) The Centre's consultant reports;

(c) The Centre's workshop papers. The data bases can be scanned by sophisticated search techniques which provide lists of citations tailored to user needs. Copies of the data bases and the customized application software will be made available free of charge to qualified users when the system has entered its operational phase in 1991.

54. The first output of the system is lists of books and articles on aspects of foreign direct investment in each of the countries to be covered in the planned handbook on transnational corporations. The lists will be included in the handbook.

55. The Centre has also significantly expanded its access to commercially produced data. This has in certain cases more than doubled the information sources that can be at the service of Governments. Such services have included:

(a) Access to an intentional data base gateway which allows the Centre to search, inter alia, data bases on European-based computers. The number of data bases thus accessible from the Centre has increased from 320 to 750 (1989);

(b) Subscription to the full text in electronic form of over 330 periodicals. This has increased sevenfold the number of professional journals available in-house in support of the research, advisory and information services provided to member States;

(c) Access to company information, both financial and textual, on microcomputer-readable compact disks. This has been expanded to cover over 12,500 United States public companies and 115,000 private companies.